

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN  
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG  
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAPE TOWN 0085

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINTS, SF  
SUBJ: RUMORS ON CABINETS CHANGES

SUMMARY: AFRIKAANS NEWSPAPERS ARE SUGGESTING THAT CONNIE MULDER WILL HEAD A TRUNCATED DEPT OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION FOLLOWING A CABINET RESHUFFLE TO BE ANNOUNCED ON JAN 26. ACCORDING TO THE SAME REPORTS, PIK BOTHA WILL HAVE THE DEPT OF INFORMATION ADDED TO HIS RESPONSIBILITIES. WE HAVE NO FIRM EVIDENCE TO INDICATE THAT THESE RUMORS ARE TRUE. IF THEY ARE, HOWEVER, PIK BOTHA WOULD APPEAR TO BE THE BIG GAINER. END SUMMARY

1. FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS THERE HAVE BEEN PERSISTENT RUMORS IN THE USUALLY RELIABLE AFRIKAANS PRESS CONCERNING THE SOUTH AFRICAN CABINET CHANGES WHICH ARE REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED TO BE ANNOUNCED ON THURSDAY, JAN 26. MOST SPECULATION IS THAT CONNIE MULDER, PRESENTLY MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND INTERIOR, WILL REPLACE ETIRING M.C. BOTHA AS MINISTER OF BANTU ADMINISTRATION. BOTHA'S OTHER PORTFOLIO, BANTU EDUCATION, IS  
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REPORTEDLY LIKELY TO GO TO WILLEM CRUYWAGEN, CURRENTLY DEPUTY MINISTER IN THAT DEPARTMENT. MULDER'S CURRENT PORTFOLIOS, IT IS REPORTED, WILL BE DIVIDED, WITH PIK BOTHA ADDING INFORMATION TO HIS CURRENT FOREIGN AFFAIRS RESPONSIBILITIES, WHILE INTERIOR GOES TO ALWYN SCHLEBUSCH, CURRENTLY MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND IMMIGRATION. AT A LOWER LEVEL, REPORTS ARE THAT DEPUTY MINISTER OF INFO LOUIS

LE GRANGE WILL BECOME DEPUTY SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AND BE REPLACED IN HIS CURRENT POSITION BY F.W. DE KLERK (A 1977 IV GRANTEE). CRUYWAGEN WILL REPORTEDLY BE REPLACED AS DEPUTY MINISTER BY PIET DU PLESSIS, NOW CHAIRMAN OF THE NP BANTU AFFAIRS GROUP.

2. ANOTHER SCENARIO WHICH THE AFRIKAANS PAPERS HAVE SUGGESTED IS POSSIBLE BUT LESS LIKELY IS THAT VORSTER DOES NOT INTEND A DRASTIC RESHUFFLE AT THIS TIME, BUT WILL MERELY PROMOTE CRUYWAGEN TO REPLACE M.C. BOTHA.

3. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH THE AFRIKAANS PRESS IS OFTEN WELL INFORMED ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NATIONAL PARTY, WE HAVE NO FIRM EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CURRENT RUMORS. IF THE CABINET CHANGES ARE IN LINE WITH THE SPECULATION IN PARA 1, THE BIG GAINER WOULD APPEAR TO BE PIK BOTHA, WHO WOULD THEREBY ACHIEVE AUTHORITY OVER ALL ASPECTS OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. DURING HIS TEN MONTHS AS FOREIGN MIN, BOTHA HAS HAD TO CONTEND WITH MULDER, A MORE SENIOR MINISTER, HOLDING THE RELATED PORTFOLIO OF INFO AD THUS HAVING A VOICE IN THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREIGN POLICY. MULDER'S SHIFT TO BANTU ADMINISTRATION, ON THE OTHER HAND, WOULD SEEM A LESS SIGNIFICANT PROMOTION, PARTICULARLY IF BANTU EDUCATION WERE TO FALL TO

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ANOTHER MINISTER. MULDER, WHO NOT LONG AGO WAS REGARDED AS HEIR APPARENT TO VORSTER, NOW APPEARS SOMEWHAT LESS WELL-POSITIONED IN THE LEADERSHIP STAKES. THERE HAVE RECENTLY BEEN RUMORS OF A MISUSE OF FUNDS IN THE EPT OF INFORMATION AND MULDER HIMSELF IS SAID TO HAVE PERSONAL FINANCIAL PROBLEMS. SOME OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT VORSTER DELIBERATELY FAILED TO DELIVER THE KEYNOTE ADDRESS AT THE TRANSVAAL NATIONAL PARTY CONGRESS IN SEPTEMBER AS A SNUB TO MULDER, WHO HEADS THE NP IN THE TRANSVAAL. (VORSTER SPOKE AT THE OTHER THREE PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES.) MULDER NOTABLY FAILED TO DRAW A LARGE CROWD FOR HIS KEYNOTE ADDRESS. THE APPOINTMENT OF MULDER TO BANTU ADMINISTRATION WOULD NOT SIGNAL MAJOR POLICY CHANGES, BUT PROBABLY RESULT IN THE ADOPTION OF A MORE PRAGMATIC AND LESS DOCTRINAIRE APPROACH TO RACIAL MATTERS THAN WAS THE CASE UNDER M.C. BOTHA.

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## Message Attributes

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